50th
ANNIVERSARY
1919-1969

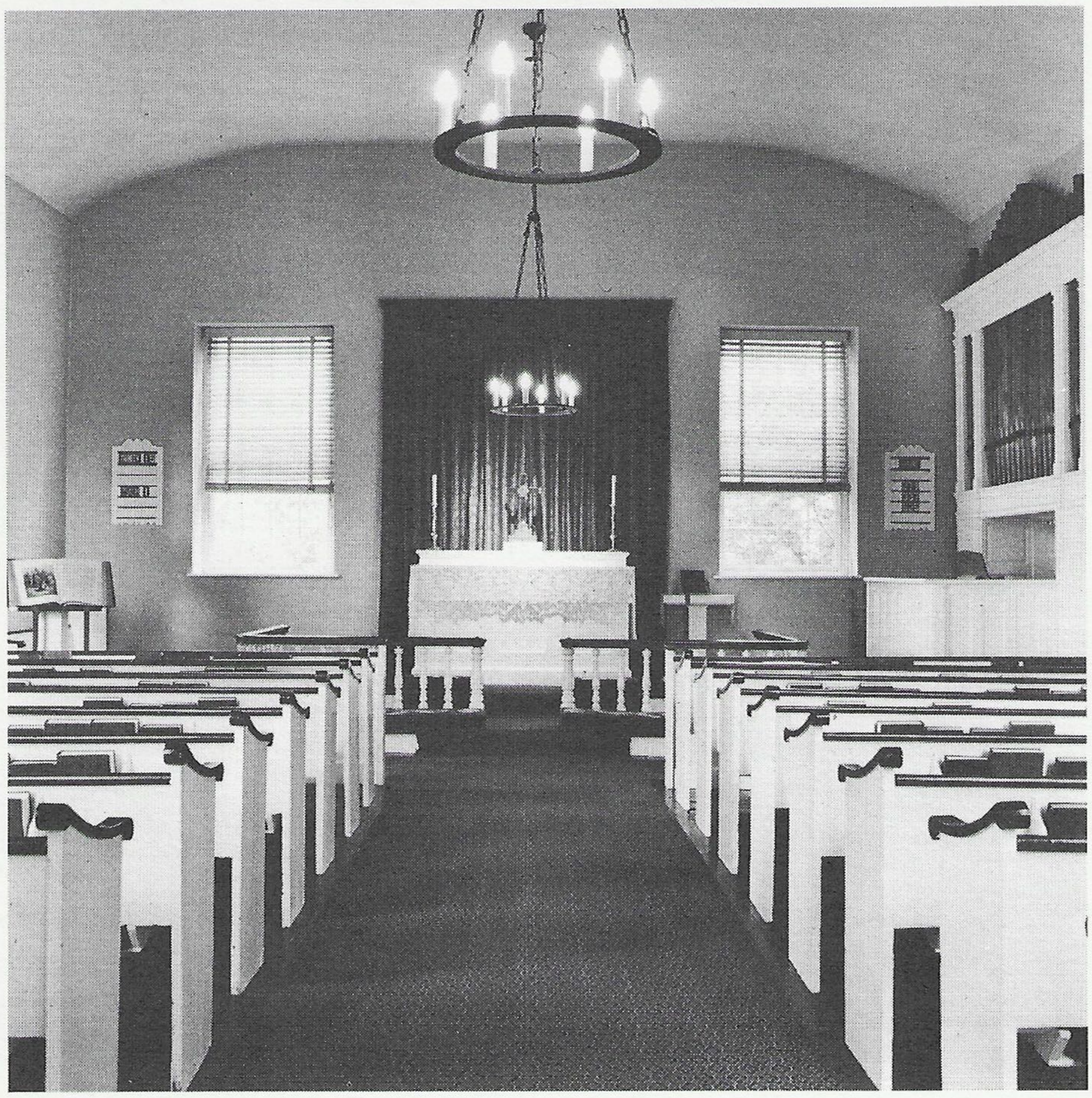
Saint John's
Episcopal Church
of
Huntingdon Valley,
Pennsylvania

Huntingdon Valley
Chapel
of
ST. JOHN'S PARISH
+
Open for Prayer
and Meditation
ALL ARE WELCOME

"Our Father, by whose servants
Our house was built of old,
Whose hand hath crowned her children
With blessings manifold,
For thine unfailing mercies
Far strewn along our way
With all who passed before us
We praise thy Name today."

"The changeful year unresting
Their silent course have sped,
New comrades ever bringing
In comrades' steps to tread:
And some are long forgotten
Long spent their hopes and fears;
Safe rest they in thy keeping,
Who changest not with years."

Front of Chapel



Interior of Chapel

This hymn perhaps best describes the church nestled among the pines at the crossroads of Washington Lane (a road dating in history from the Revolutionary War) and Welsh Road (the connecting road between Second Street Pike and Old York Road—the one-time main thoroughfares into Philadelphia) now called St. John's Episcopal Church. The original building—small, colonial, intimate—was known for many years as the Huntingdon Valley Chapel, and has seen many uses ranging from a one-room schoolhouse to the stop of a Methodist circuit rider years ago. This building, rich in heritage and tradition, stands as a reminder of yesteryear for those who did not reap where they laboured but now "reap what they have sown."

Welsh Road, on which the church is situated, was laid out from the bridge between the land of John Humphreys and Edward Foulke in Gwyneth to the Milles on the Pennypack Creek at a Ford in Moreland Township. The early settlers used this road to bring their grain to be converted to flour.

The name Huntingdon Valley is an historical one. John Boutcher, of Maryland, by his will dated June 25, 1707, bequeathed to his son Samuel 350 acres of land, with all its improvements and mentioned

it as being "at Huntingdon." This tract then came into the possession of Thomas Austin who thereon erected a gristmill on Welsh Road.

When the application was made for a Post Office in 1850, the word "Valley" was added in order to retain the name Huntingdon, since the former name existed elsewhere in the State. At the beginning of the 20th century the name "Goosetown" was also given this area, so derived from the great numbers of geese raised in this vicinity along the Pennypack.

In the year 1847, Joseph Erwin gave an acre of land from the corner of his farm, known as Fairview Corners, for a place of worship. As a result of volunteer labor from the farmers and paper mill workers and monetary gifts for materials, the little church was completed in 1848. At that time it was placed under the direction of the Methodist Conference as a Methodist Episcopal Church and until 1919 was known as the "Fairview Methodist Church."

In 1872 services were discontinued, supposedly because the population of the area was dwindling. However, in an article in a township booklet, the Rev. Colin T. Gorman states, "In the year 1872, Methodism came to Bethayres and Huntingdon Valley. On February 6 of that year the Rev. Jeremiah Brandreth, a knitting mill worker and local preacher from Germantown, came to this community under appointment by the Philadelphia Conference to organize a Methodist society . . . The Lord blessed the work and after a short time, the Methodist Episcopal Church of Bethayres was formed with a membership of five." Truly an interesting fact of this whole picture when one reads that Fairview Methodist Episcopal Church was closing its doors!

In 1892, an attempt was made to open the building for a Sunday School, but unfortunately this did not occur. As a result, most of the bodies in the churchyard were moved elsewhere; the churchyard became a weed patch and the building fell into a state of disrepair.

Thus the Fairview Methodist Episcopal Church lay dormant. It became a shabby building by the side of the road, neglected and showing the wears of time.

In 1919, a second birth was given to the little "Fairview Corners Methodist Church." But this time it was not the Methodists who brought it about. It was the Episcopalians.

Edward E. Marshall, a prominent business man of the area, bought the property and turned it over to the Right Reverend P. M. Rhinelander, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania. It should be mentioned that while the Diocese of Pennsylvania originally encompassed the whole state, as the state become more populated it became necessary to divide it into several dioceses. Thus today the Diocese of Pennsylvania, still retaining the historical title, neverthe-

less only encompasses the city of Philadelphia and the five county area surrounding it.

There are several interesting sidelights at this point. The first is that three other businessmen of the town thought that it wouldn't be fair to the Bishop to just hand him a piece of land with an old building on it. Thus it was decided that each man would contribute $2,500, thereby giving the Bishop $10,000 with which to begin anew.

Secondly, according to the recollection of the Rev. John Walker, the "floors, windows and roof were repaired and Mr. Marshall then offered it as a place of worship to the people of the surrounding country. During the war and immediately following, the neighboring farms were bought by Philadelphia businessmen and homes were established. A small group of people got together and decided to ask a minister of the gospel to come for services. These people seemed to have no connection with any denomination. Edward Fitch, a leading spirit, looked in the newspaper and first lighted upon the name of Bishop Rhinelander, whom he phoned and invited to conduct a service.

On Sunday, March 30, 1919, the Bishop and the Rev. Samuel Booth came out to Huntingdon Valley. The following Sunday, the Bishop brought Rev. John W. Walker for the service. It was immediately after this service that a special meeting was held in the home of Mr. Fitch.

Isabel and John Walker

"At this time the group of persons present agreed to be responsible for the payment of a clerical supply whom the Bishop would send for regular Sunday services. Upon the conclusion of the meeting Bishop Rhinelander asked Mr. Walker to take the work. Mr. Walker could not take charge until the Fall, but his appointment was made then and as a supply for the summer the Rev. Julian Hamlin was placed in charge. Thus regular services of Morning Prayer and a Church School with Evening Prayer were held during the time of April to August inclusive."

Mr. Walker was ordained in Connecticut, his home having been in Cheshire, and his first Parish in Southern Florida. He had been manager of the Seamen's Church Institute when he came to Huntingdon Valley for his first visit, but resigned from that position in June, 1919.

The year 1919 proved to be a busy one. On August 30, the Walkers moved to Meadowbrook, so regarded by them since they happened

to use Meadowbrook station as a mail address. Another report states that Mr. Walker came into residence in October and continued the services. It remains a fact that in the Fall of 1919, Mr. Walker took full charge of Huntingdon Valley Chapel.

Originally the name taken for the Chapel was "Saint Hilda's" with the intention that it might become a place of worship for the girls from the nearby Ogontz School, now a branch of Penn State University. However the people of the community wished to call it "The Huntingdon Valley Chapel," for which name the Bishop gave consent.

It was in November 1919, that the first Celebration of the Holy Eucharist was held, and from that time regularly became the main service of Sunday at 9:30 a.m. The accompanying features were lights, Eucharistic vestments and choral service. The Bishop had asked that there always be a service of Holy Communion at 9:30 without variation and at 11:00, the freedom to have any kind of teaching service for non-communicants in preparation for attending the 9:30 service. Mr. Walker states that from that time until October 1954, there never was a Sunday without the celebration of the Holy Communion at 9:30.

It is also interesting to note that before assuming his duties at Huntingdon Valley Chapel, Mr. Walker organized the Meadowbrook School which was the successor to the old Seibert Institute, a children's school. He was its headmaster from 1919 to 1941.

Mr. Walker stated in an interview that there was definitely no connection between Meadowbrook School and Huntingdon Valley Chapel, although Bishop Tait later remarked that he wondered why the school had not been taken under the Church's jurisdiction. John Walker felt that having the parents of the school responsible helped to keep the school functioning and in better condition, whereas the Diocese would have closed the school two or three times.

It was not until 1928, under the direction of John P. B. Sinkler, architect, that the interior of the Huntingdon Valley Chapel was restored as nearly as possible to its original appearance. At this time an addition was built on the east side to house the organ and Sunday School classrooms, a new entrance constructed and new dossal installed.

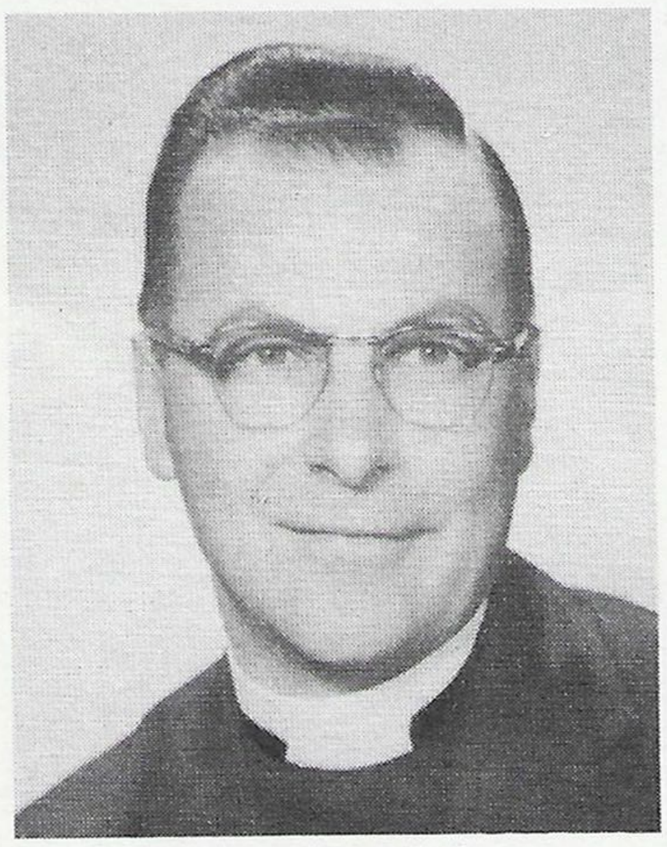
As to the early Vestry or Committee in charge, the Bishop asked that there be a Warden and a Treasurer selected to function with his approval. Later a Committee was formed, nominated by the congregation. The vicar was appointed for the coming year on Easter Monday every year until 1954, with tenture for one year only.

In 1930, the salaries at the Meadowbrook School were cut, and this led one of the congregation's most active members, Wharton

Sinkler, to say to John Walker, "Give up your school salary and I will see that the Chapel pays you a salary." Up until this time John Walker had received no salary from the Chapel.

The 40's were indeed busy for The Rev. and Mrs. Walker. Mr. Walker finally left Meadowbrook School in 1941, and therefore his home in the Headmaster's House. Construction of the Chapel Rectory began in 1940, through funds mainly provided by George Elkins, George Tyler and Wharton Sinkler and on ground given by Miss Ellen Herkness. There was never a debt at any time at the Chapel and Wharton Sinkler, the Vicar's Warden at that time, can be seen in pictures turning the sod for the Vicarage. The beautiful 10-room Vicarage was completed in 1941.

October 1954 saw the retirement of the Rev. John W. Walker as vicar at Huntingdon Valley Chapel which he had so faithfully served. It is interesting to note that even when he was away he made provision for the Rev. William Patterson, Rector at Gwynnedd, to take the 9:30 service at Huntingdon Valley. In return John Walker took the 8:00 and 11:00 a.m. services in Gwynnedd when Mr. Patterson was away. This arrangement went on for years.



Walter K. Malone

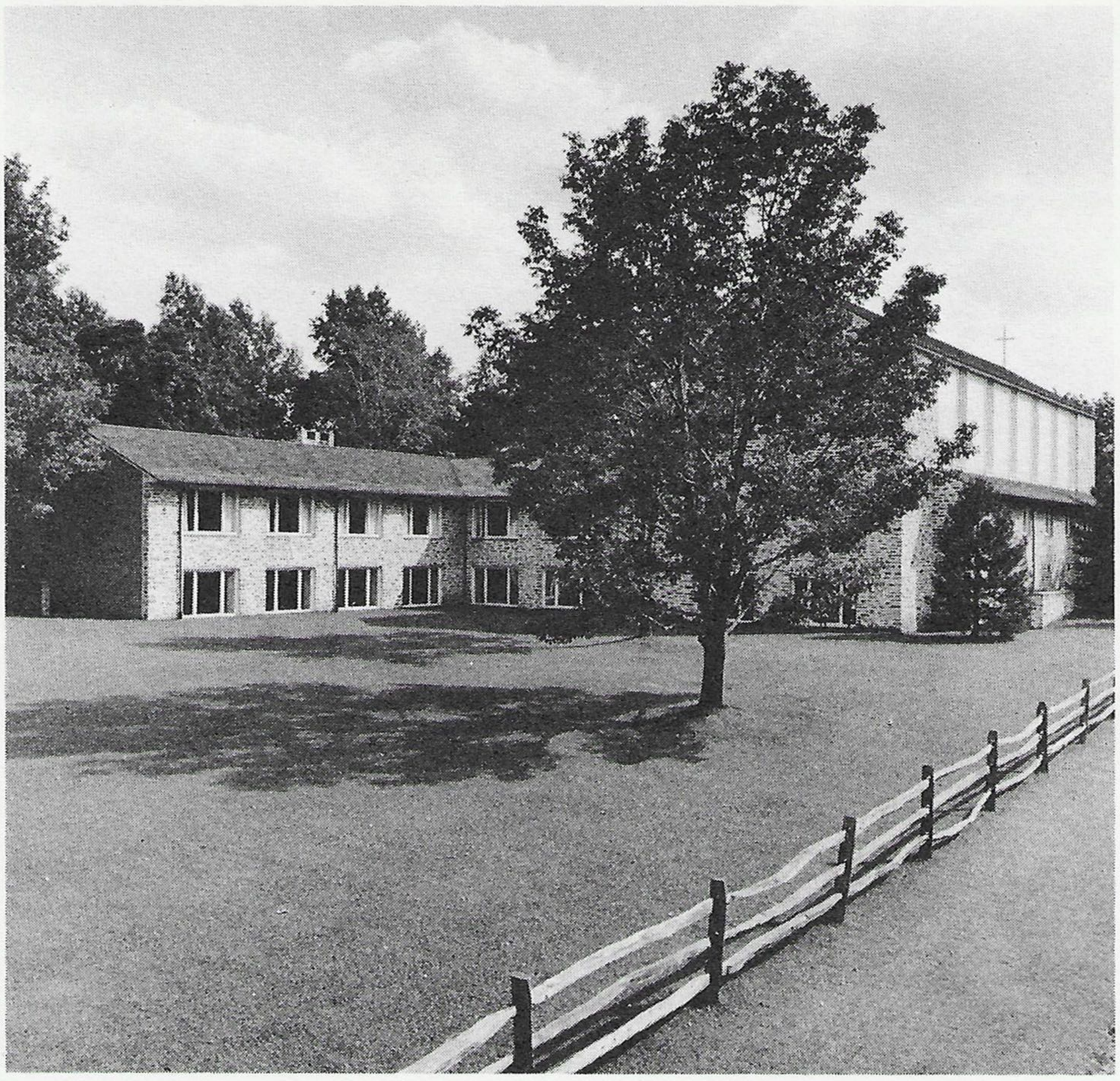
On November 1, 1954 still another chapter was opened in the years of history at Huntingdon Valley Chapel. The Rev. Walter K. Malone became its vicar.

The Chapel experienced tremendous growth and as a result decided to apply to the Diocese of Pennsylvania for parish status. This was done in 1956, and the name for the parish church became St. John's Episcopal Church while the Chapel was used for smaller services and became known as the Huntingdon Valley Chapel of St. John's Episcopal Church. The name "St. John" was chosen because he was considered one of the most spiritual, quiet and gentle disciples, these qualities being characteristic of the life of Huntingdon Valley Chapel.

Shortly after Dr. Malone's arrival the Church was to embark on a building program to keep pace with the fast growth of the community. The original acre given in 1847 grew in 1957 to six and one half acres and a beautiful $250,000 building containing a new church and education facilities. Presently the 7:30 service of Holy Communion and 11:15 service of Morning Prayer are held in the Chapel, while the Church is used for the Family Service at 9:30.

As was stated in the original brochure put out by the Building

Front View of St. John's Church



Side View of Educational Building and of St. John's Church

Rectory of St. John's Church

THE REV. PAUL WAYNE LINGLE,
Present Rector of St. John's

Committee, "the new church is much more contemporary in design and yet retains the 'quiet, unhurried dignity and simplicity of the Chapel' with whom it shares the spotlight. The interior of the Church follows the basic symbolism of the Cross. In like manner to the traverse beam, the lower area of the nave, including the space for worshippers, delineated by the horizontal line of the side aisle ceilings, symbolized our relationship to each other. And like the vertical beam, the broad upsweep of the main walls expresses our relationship towards God."

Dr. Malone carried on his work, seeing the church grow and with the confidence that "God's power will be manifested and His work accomplished in the world only if we are diligent in our worship and service at home," until he submitted to the Vestry his letter of resignation in May, 1965.

In October of that year, the Vestry called the Rev. Paul Wayne Lingle to become the rector, and he assumed his duties the first Sunday in January, 1966. Under his direction and prayerful guidance, the church continued to grow and enrich the crossroads of history.

Thus St. John's, acknowledging the past, and being conscious of the present, anxiously prepares for the future so that generations to come might learn to love and serve their God.

A Chronological History of Spotlights and Sidelights of St. John's

1847 Acre of land given by Joseph Erwin from his farm for the construction of a place of worship at Washington Lane & Welsh Road. The church called Fairview Methodist Episcopal Church.

1850 Application made by area for Post Office and historical name Huntingdon taken after "Valley" was added since the former name existed elsewhere in the State.

1872 Worship services discontinued.

1892 Attempt made to open for Sunday School but did not continue.

1919 Spring—Building purchased by E. E. Marshall from Methodist Conference.

Sunday, March 30, 1919 Bishop Rhinelander and Rev. Samuel Booth came out for an afternoon service.

Sunday, April 6, 1919—The Rev. John Walker came out with the Bishop and after a meeting at the home of Edward Fitch was asked and agreed on becoming vicar at Huntingdon Valley Chapel.

Summer—services conducted by The Rev. Julian Hamlin.

August 30, 1919—The Rev. and Mrs. Walker moved to Meadowbrook. Start of Meadowbrook School.

Fall—took full charge of Huntingdon Valley Chapel.

November—Deed given to Bishop Rhinelander and therefore it became a Bishop's Chapel.

November 16th—First service of Holy Communion.

December 18th—First Confirmation class.

1920 A two manual pipe organ, with electric action, was installed. Building entirely refinished inside and many gifts were made that sanctuary might be properly equipped.

1922 February—Between one and two acres were given for a rectory site by Miss Ellen Herkness.

Summer—The church yard was surveyed and lots for burial were set apart.

1923 The basement was dug, furnace installed, concrete supporting walls put in.

1925 Electric lights were installed, a new porch added and other gifts.

1928 The interior of the building, under the direction of John P. B. Sinkler, achitect, was restored as nearly as possible to its original appearance.

1930 The Rev. John Walker started to receive a salary from the Huntingdon Valley Chapel.

1940 Vicarage was started.

1941 The Walker's moved into their new home thereby retiring as Headmaster at Meadowbrook which he held from 1919 until 1941.

1954 October—The Rev. John Walker retired.

November 1, 1954—The Reverend Walter K. Malone became Vicar at Huntingdon Valley Chapel.

1956 Admitted to Convention as a parish named St. John's Episcopal Church of Huntingdon Valley.

1957 Sunday June 9, 1957 at 10:45 cornerstone laid for the Church facilities costing $250,000 for both a church and educational wing.

1965 May—The Rev. Dr. Walter K. Malone resigns as rector at St. John's.

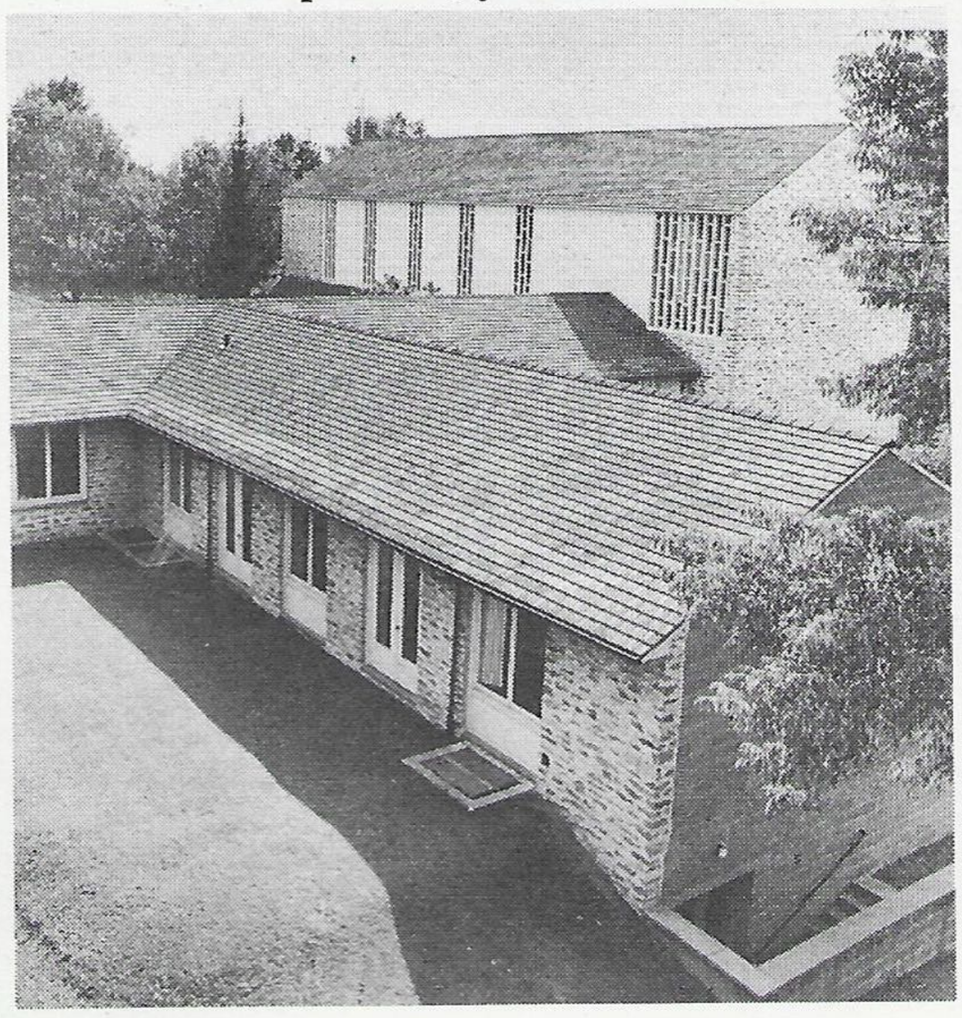
October—The Rev. Paul Wayne Lingle called as rector.

1966 First Sunday in January—The Rev. Paul Wayne Lingle assumes his duties as rector.

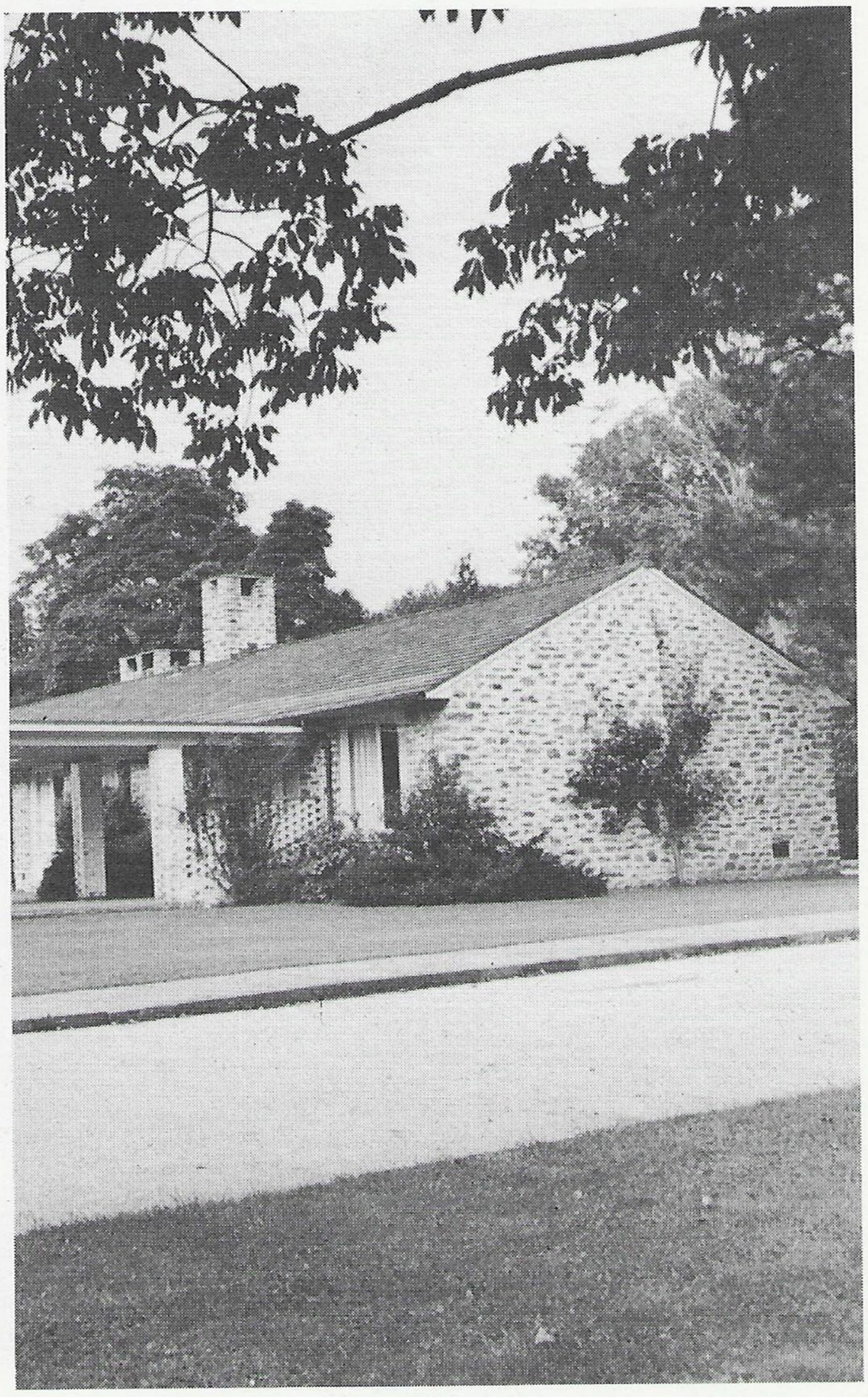
1969 October 12, 1969—50th Anniversary Luncheon held at the Church.

Plaque honoring John White Walker, June 1969

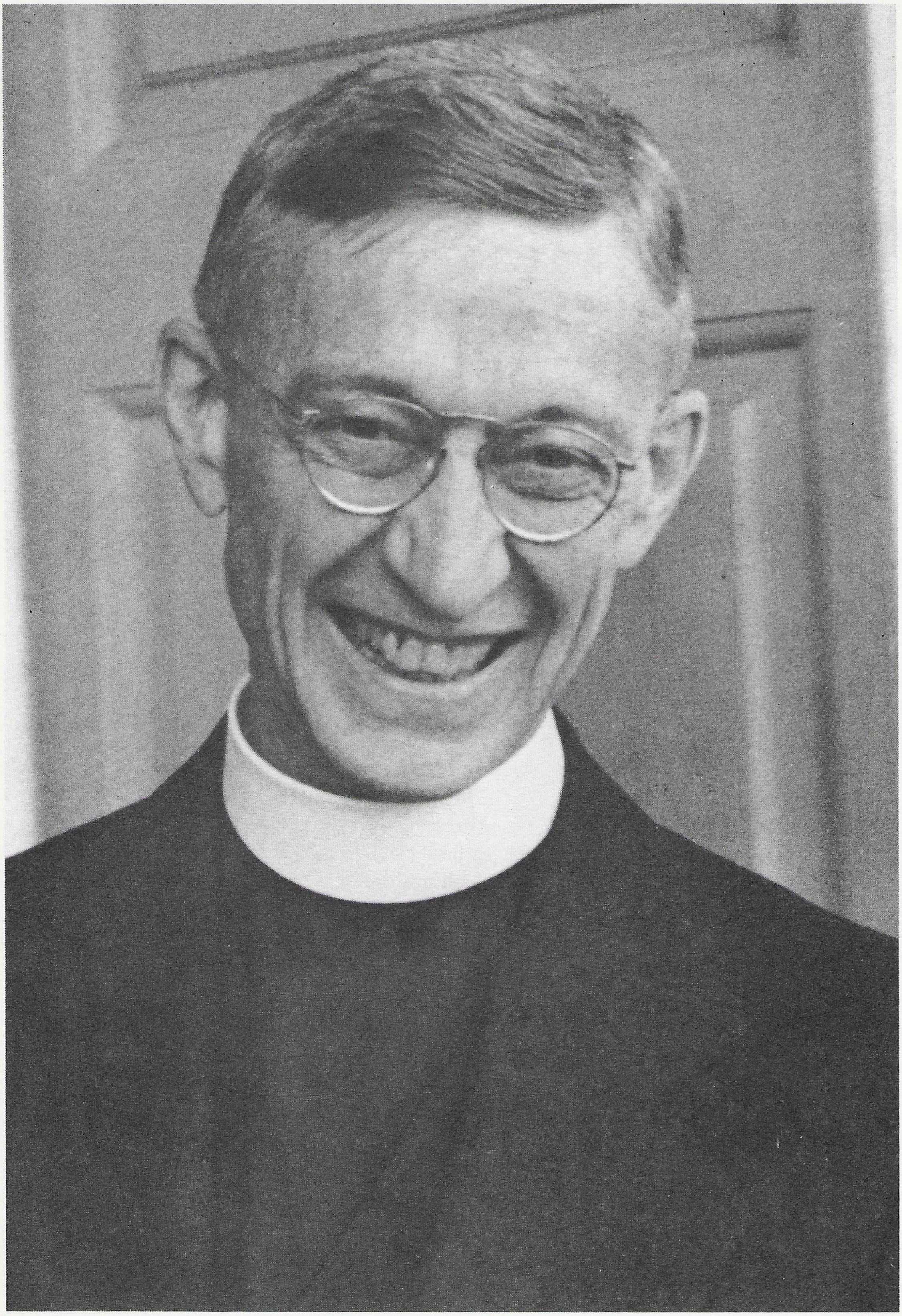
Cornerstone of Church,
Bishop Hart, June 9, 1957



Side View of Educational Building,
Side View of Church in Background.



Front View of
Educational Building



THE REV. JOHN WHITE WALKER
1st Vicar, Huntingdon Valley Chapel
1919-1954

It Is Good To Remember

John Locke once said that memory is the only paradise out of which man cannot be driven. There is a world of truth in this statement. Not only is memory a paradise out of which man cannot be driven, but when he has been cast out of some paradise, memory is a highway that can lead him back into it. Memory is one of God's good gifts to man.

There is a beautiful hebrew word for memory which is used many times in the Old Testament. It is the pictorial word "Zawkar." This word comes from three roots which bring three mental pictures to the mind of anyone recalling persons or events from the past. The first root means "a man," the second "a mark," and the third, "a memento."

Looking back to the beginning of our parish fifty years ago, we see "a man," John White Walker, the first Vicar who served thirty-five years in this parish and left "a mark" on the parish and the community which continues to the present. The Chapel is the material "memento" and the blessings in the lives of many in this community are the spiritual "mementos" which are the continuing memorials of a life of dedicated christian service.

We are not losing sight of the other clergy and lay people who have nourished and strengthened the christian life of our Church. But it is fitting on this Fiftieth Anniversary to honor Dr. and Mrs. John White Walker for the firm foundation they laid, upon which others have been able to build.

Fond memories bring the light of other days around us. Yes it is good to remember and give thanks.

St. John's Episcopal Church

WELSH ROAD & WASHINGTON LANE

HUNTINGDON VALLEY, PA., 19006

1919 **50th Anniversary Year** 1969